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Ontario

**Niagara
Escarpment
Commission**

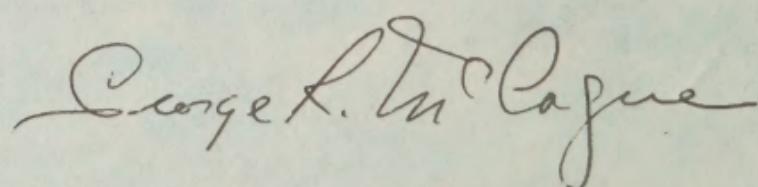
The Niagara Escarpment

We in Ontario have inherited a unique land formation, rich in its natural features, a historical record of geologic and climatic changes over 500 million years.

The Niagara Escarpment, one of the world's truly magnificent natural wonders, stretches 465 miles from Queenston to Tobermory. Its scenic views, cliffs, hills, waterfalls and unusual rock formations blend excitingly with its rich agricultural lands, wildlife habitats, recreation areas and populated urban centres.

How do we preserve such uniqueness? This question is foremost on the minds of all members of the Niagara Escarpment Commission in their attempt to produce a realistic Master Plan for the area. The task is to preserve the Escarpment while allowing only that development to take place which is compatible with the distinct characteristics of the Escarpment.

The public, the government and the Commission, working together, will maintain and enhance the Niagara Escarpment.



George R. McCague,
Chairman,
Niagara Escarpment Commission

The Niagara Escarpment Commission

The Legislature of Ontario has established the Niagara Escarpment Commission by "An Act to provide for Planning and Development of the Niagara Escarpment and its Vicinity". This Act - Bill 129, provides the planning framework encompassing three major features: a Commission to do the planning, a new approach to the method of controlling development and an assurance of public participation.

THE GOAL:

The fundamental goal set forth by the Government of Ontario is "to maintain the Niagara Escarpment as a continuous natural environment while seeking to accommodate demands compatible with that environment".

THE OBJECTIVES:

In preparing a Master Plan for the 2,000-square-mile Niagara Escarpment Planning Area, the Commission will be guided by seven objectives:

- * To protect unique ecologic and historic areas;
- * To maintain and enhance the quality and character of natural streams and water supplies;
- * To provide adequate opportunities for outdoor recreation, through the public and private sectors;
- * To maintain and enhance the open landscape character of the Niagara Escarpment by such means as compatible farming or forestry and by preserving the natural scenery;
- * To ensure that all new development is compatible with the goal for the Escarpment;
- * To provide for adequate public access to the Escarpment;
- * Through co-operation and assistance, support municipalities within the Niagara Escarpment Planning Area in their exercise of the planning functions conferred upon them by The Planning Act to attain the goal of the Commission.

Ontario's Unique System for The Niagara Escarpment

Development Control as proposed in the Niagara Escarpment Planning and Development Act is a land use control system that is new to Ontario.

It has been decided to use this new technique in controlling land use in order to avoid freezing all development along the Escarpment during the time in which the Master Plan is being prepared.

The Act makes provision for the operation of this unique system of Development Control within certain designated sections of the Niagara Escarpment Planning Area so that the goal and objectives set forth in the Act can be achieved. Within these designated sections (Areas of Development Control) municipal zoning by-laws and Minister's orders cease to have effect.

Proposals for development that fall within the designated Development Control Areas are submitted through an application to the Niagara Escarpment Commission. Except for exemptions set out in the regulations, development can take place only after a development permit has been issued by the Commission.

In cases where someone is in disagreement with the Commission's decision, an appeal procedure allows for a hearing.

A development permit must precede but does not replace a building permit or other permits related to development.

Land Use Control Niagara Escarpment

The Development Control system features flexibility that allows for every development proposal to be considered on its own merits and, if found compatible with the planning policies of the Commission, a development permit may be issued.

This system of planning, regulating and controlling sensitive areas along the environmental corridor of the Escarpment will undoubtedly prove to be a major factor in maintaining and preserving this unique ecological phenomenon.

The Niagara Escarpment Commission, through the introduction of Development Control, will bring about the necessary interim land use regulations that will prepare the way for the preparation and adoption of a Master Plan.

The Commission has a technical staff of Development Control personnel, including planners, landscape architects and planning technicians, to assist in carrying out the process of this positive new approach to controlling development within the designated special areas.

Information and assistance on planning and development matters within the Niagara Escarpment Planning Area can be obtained by contacting the Niagara Escarpment Commission at its central office, 232 Guelph Street, Georgetown, Ontario, or at local offices at 166 Main Street West, Grimsby, Ontario, and 11-13 Marsh Street, Clarksburg, Ontario.

A Master Plan: Determination to Save

The Niagara Escarpment forms a scenic route across Ontario, touching 55 local municipalities and eight counties and regions. In full consultation with these municipalities and the public at large, the Niagara Escarpment Commission will prepare a Master Plan for the 1.3-million-acre Niagara Escarpment Planning Area.

The Commission itself is representative of a wide range of interests and experience. Nine members, including the Chairman, have been appointed to represent the public at large. Eight members represent county and regional municipal jurisdictions.

The Commission's terms of reference in Bill 129 provide an unprecedented opportunity to work with local municipal councils and planning authorities to develop new concepts and techniques in drafting the Niagara Escarpment Master Plan.

The plan must not only reflect the nature and extent of demands but also the limited capacity of land to accommodate them.

The Master Plan, in achieving the goal and objectives outlined in the Niagara Escarpment Planning and Development Act, is intended to contain policies for the economic, social and physical development of the planning area in respect of governing:

- * the management of land and water resources;
- * population distribution and density;
- * the general location of industry and commerce;
- * identification of major land use areas;

The Niagara Escarpment

- * provision of major parks and open space;
- * acquisition of land by the government;
- * pollution control of the natural environment;
- * location and development of major servicing, communications and transportation systems;
- * development and maintenance of educational, cultural, recreational, health and other social facilities;
- * financing and programming of public development projects and capital works;
- * co-ordination of planning and development programs of the various ministries of the Niagara Escarpment Planning Area;
- * private sector developments - to ensure that they will be compatible with the environment of the Escarpment.

It will be necessary for some Escarpment land to be acquired by the Government of Ontario in order to maintain unique ecologic and historic areas as well as public access to the Escarpment. However, the Escarpment can be preserved by limited acquisition and appropriate land use regulations.

In view of the Escarpment's valuable mineral resources and the demands for aggregate, it becomes necessary to study alternate sources as a prerequisite of the Master Plan.

The Commission's policy, in preparing the Master Plan, is to preserve the Escarpment's unique area as a wilderness and recreation resource while accommodating other land uses that are compatible with such preservation.

NIAGARA ESCARPMENT PLANNING AREA

